

SYNOPSIS

BADEN-POWELL, TWO LIVES OF A HERO

By: Lawrence E. Clay

This exhibit portrays the "two lives" of Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of World Scouting. Although known world-wide today as the founder of Scouting, in 1900 he was the most famous man in England, celebrated as the "Hero of Mafeking." The exhibit is based on the Baden-Powell biography, "The Two Lives of a Hero," by William Hillcourt, a famous American Scouter.

The exhibit is broken down into two main parts. The first section is the first life of Baden-Powell as the "Hero of Mafeking," which covers the period from his birth on February 22, 1857 in London, England through his retirement from the military at age 50. The second part, as the founder of Scouting, covers his life from the first Scout camp at Brownsea Island until his death in Kenya on January 8, 1941.

Baden-Powell was born February 22, 1857 in London. He shares a birth date of February 22 with George Washington, first President of the United States. Stamps illustrate the fact that he was a Pisces and his name being shortened to B-P. His childhood includes private boarding school at Charterhouse. He was commissioned in the Army and served tours of duty in India, Afghanistan and Africa. Included in the stamps and covers illustrating this service is an actual letter mailed in 1896 from Sierra Leone to Major Baden-Powell in London which was forwarded several times.

The major factor in Baden-Powell's first life was the Siege of Mafeking in 1899 - 1900. As a Lt. Colonel, he led a force of native and British soldiers in the defense of Mafeking against a large force of Boers. Philatelic highlights of the Siege include a variety of Mafeking Besieged stamps, covers carried through the Boer lines, etc. When the regular supply of stamps ran out, three stamps were produced by the garrison including the "bicycle" stamp and the Baden-Powell small and large heads. Varieties shown include the cracked plate variety. The exhibit also includes a cover mailed internally in Mafeking and franked with the small head stamp.

Following the end of the Siege, Baden-Powell visited at the Cecil Rhodes plantation as evidenced by a letter written on Cecil Rhodes' stationery. Also shown are two letters written while he was in charge of the South African Constabulary. He ended his service as Inspector General of the Cavalry.

His second life started with a challenge from William Smith, founder of the boys' Brigade, and the first Scout camp at Brownsea Island in August 1907. The exhibit notes the rapid expansion of Scouting around the world and the founding of the Girl Guides and Girl Scouts by 1910. A highlight of this period is a post card showing Baden-Powell in general's uniform reading the King's Message to the Boy Scouts at the 1909 Crystal Palace Rally.

A special part of his second life was his marriage at age 55 to Olave St. Clair Soames. Some of this life together is shown in the exhibit. The exhibit illustrates the many symbols of Scouting that Baden-Powell developed such as the Scout oath, law, sign, salute, motto, slogan, uniform, etc. Special items are an imperf pair of the 1957 Belgian stamp showing the Scout and guide badges, the 1957 Korea souvenir sheet showing a Scout with a stave, misperfed US Scout stamps, etc.

Baden-Powell received correspondence from around the world and letters are shown from China, Belgium and France. Also shown is a letter from Jan Christian Smuts South Africa Prime Minister, in 1923.

Baden-Powell's attendance at World Scout Jamborees is noted. He was made Chief Scout of the World at the 1920 London Jamboree and Jamborees from 1924 through 1937 are all illustrated. Also shown are stamps, etc. showing his contact with Scout leaders around the world and some of his travels around the world. Of particular interest were a couple of Rocket Mail items for his visit to the All-India Jamboree in 1937 and a flight cover from Cairo - Brisbane which he picked up and signed for in Australia.

Finally, he said "Farewell to Scouting" at the 1937 Jamboree in the Netherlands and retired to Kenya with Lady Baden-Powell where he died on January 8, 1941. His death is illustrated by several philatelic items including a rare Kenya proof item.

The exhibit includes a wide range of philatelic items including souvenir sheets, imperfs, color proofs, gutter pairs, maximum cards, specimen overprints, perfins, special cancellations, slogan meters, post cards, various philatelic usages such as postage due, censored, etc.